

HARTFORD STREET ZEN CENTER "NEWS"

57 Hartford Street -- Phone: 863-2507 -- Email: hszc108@yahoo.com -- Website: www.hszc.org -- April, 2007



Jeff Tarvin
(June 5, 1959- August 28, 2006)
by Jennifer Birkett

Jeff, a loving friend, lived with AIDS for over 20 years and was courageously present with the disease process even after all treatment options began to fail rapidly. I introduced him to John King last June; they met several times and died within three weeks of each other in August. Shortly after Jeff died, his lover, Randy, found this poem.

Jeff's Poem

Faded and tattered
Crumpled on the floor
Worn too many
Dances and weddings
And funerals and more
My body lies there
As I escape through a hidden door
No more was or when
Just me becoming a then

I'm flying away
One journey's done
One's just begun
No reasons why
No sad goodbyes
Just let me go
But let me stay and live through you
Keep my love alive

Living With Our Dying Friends (Anonymous Sangha Friend)

Anyone who volunteers in a hospice knows that we receive more than we give. Despite pain and sorrow, hospice friends show us joy and a sense of dignity in simple things. Sharing their stories and sometimes sharing end of life issues are very intimate gifts.

Recently, I met this beautiful man named Michael, full of smiles and fun who said the doctors didn't know how he was still alive. He hoped that Buddhism would help him understand what death was about. Raised fundamentalist Christian, Michael was blessed with a loving family. But his family could not reconcile their religious beliefs with the reality of his being gay and having AIDS. They equated his illness with (appropriate) punishment and were praying that he wouldn't go to hell.

I said to Michael, "Can you just thank your family for their love and then say your views are different?" Michael was also concerned about his boyfriend whom he felt was not always there for him. We talked about telling his friend what he felt and what he needed. And that he, Michael, needed to understand this was very difficult for his boyfriend as well.

When I saw Michael next, he had told his family that he loved them and thanked them for loving him. He explained that his views on life and death were different, and that he respected them. And guess what? They embraced him and said they loved him too. No arguments, just love. He talked to his boyfriend also. His friend, who had never told Michael how he truly felt, took out his journal and read for an hour about what their relationship meant to him.

The peacefulness on Michael's face touched me so deeply that I could not speak. He had uncovered an understanding of death that made him unafraid.

When I learned Michael was failing, I went to see him and brought him a little Buddha statue, the happy Buddha. He was nearly blind so he asked me to describe it. When I left he was rubbing Buddha's face and belly. He said that it was important to him that I meet his family who were in the garden. I did and I saw their pain and felt their love.

I saw Michael once more, when he was actively dying. He was confused but not agitated. "I love you," I said. He replied, "I love you too." I told him not to be afraid and chanted the refuges for him. We embraced and I kissed him goodbye. He died the next day, peacefully. I'm grateful to have met Michael and share his journey, to have known him and feel how he changed me.

Thank You

Thanks to Revs. Jordan Thorn and Dave Haselwood for their Dharma talks, Laura Burges for her Sangha-e! article about Issan and our 25th Anniversary, to Laura (again) and Jeffrey Schneider for a Meditation & Recovery Retreat on our behalf, Colin Bohrer for a DVD player, the Gay Men's Buddhist Sangha for the shiny new kitchen trash container, Richard Chiofolo for hosting movie night and Ross Todd for continuing to help us by financing the Monk Blog site.

Thanks to John Byrne for organizing several work parties in February to remove all the wood and other debris from the back yard. We appreciate everyone who helped breakdown and organize the debris into bundles, Myo pounding out nails, and all the Sangha friends who helped carry the debris through the zendo into John's jeep for a trip to the dump. Dirty work but we had fun. Much appreciation to all who helped out. With a bow.

Abundant gratitude to Rev. John King for his generous legacy on behalf of HSZC and to a donor (wishing to remain anonymous) who has generously provided for us in their legacy planning.

HSZC Board of Directors: Openings

The Board of Directors of our non-profit organization has a small number of vacancies. The Board meets once a month to plan and oversee the finances, events, building, gardening, cat well-being, and other aspects of life and practice at HSZC. If you are interested in joining this collegial group or would like to find out more, please contact Mimi Manning or Larry Peiperl. Board members will be elected at our annual membership meeting in June. A brief written application is required. Thanks.

APRIL DATES TO REMEMBER

April 3	Full Moon Ceremony
April 11	Board of Directors Meeting
April 14	Buddha's Birthday Celebration

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Hatred Cannot Cease By Hatred (Part 2) - Excerpts from Rev. Myo Lahey's Dharma Talk 12/30/06

(Part 1 concluded with the statement that we have national leaders publicly insulting one another and then saying how pleased they were that they did so.)

This makes me think of an article in the New York Times that I saw this week. It was quite interesting. I believe it was an opinion piece of some sort, perhaps by a professor of philosophy some place. He was talking about the conflict in his mind between what he called "authenticity" and "sincerity." Did anyone see that in the Times? It really caught my attention.

In the article's frame of reference, authenticity is something like your actual inner experience of yourself, your immediate feeling, thinking and so forth. And sincerity is actually meaning what you say.

This philosopher was saying that somehow the ball has landed in the court of authenticity and just stayed there. So that now, more and more, what people are valuing is, if you feel like insulting someone, you insult him or her. If you have some racist feelings, for instance, that that's somehow ok. And the thing to do then is to be "authentic" and just to let that be. This philosopher was saying he thought that that was way off, and I found I had to agree.

He was saying, sincerity means there is some vital connection between what you're expressing and your actual feeling. But he says, for instance, what if someone is at heart racist? One idea is that most of us who grew up in this culture are indeed racists, because we've been deeply acculturated that way in all kinds of subtle and not-so-subtle fashions. Then first of all, it's very helpful if you notice that that is so. I'm not sure if the philosopher said that, but I'm saying that. You notice your racist feelings. And then the author said that in a civil society, where people are actually making some effort not to be juvenile and dangerous, you actually relate to others in a non-racist way consciously and deliberately; that is, you "mean" it. So if someone comes to rent your apartment and you think s/he's the wrong color, you might find yourself wishing that s/he weren't African-American or Chinese or something. And having noticed that you feel that way, you actually with your conscious mind and body determine that you will not use those feelings as the basis of your interactions. You say to yourself, "That is not how I'm going to react with this person. Yes, I have that feeling, but I'm not going to act out that supposed authenticity. I'm sincerely going to offer this person this apartment if s/he is otherwise qualified. And I'm going to mean it."

This is quite like practice. It may not have obviously Buddhist roots as we look at it, but I'd say it is quite like our effort. Our own effort in part is to notice the arising of hatred and so on, and our kind of authenticity is in that noticing and acknowledging to ourselves that such a thing is happening. Then and only then do we have the option of using the practice of the precepts to orient the actions of body, speech and mind in a way that is wholesome and beneficial, consciously and deliberately.

This is one view of precept practice and I think that's what that person in the paper was talking about. And in this direction lies the end of hatred. Not in the direction of, "Well, this is what I feel and I'm going to say it." Children do that. And part of becoming a non-child is understanding that while you may have such-and-such a feeling, acting on that basis will not

be helpful in some situation, and so you don't do it. This may seem obvious to everybody here. But there isn't anybody else to talk to right now except you guys. So once again, I'm preaching to the choir. There it is.

Then you go out into the world and these teachings, which I'm just passing on to you because they were passed on to me, come into the world more and more and more. At least we hope so. Then the next time they're out to hang somebody, somebody might say, "You know, maybe that's not so good. Maybe that just continues the cycle." And although there are apparently a lot of people who think vengefully, as in, "Well, this guy killed my daughter so let's kill him," maybe there's some way to get them to see that this actually is not going to fix anything. Of course everyone knows that this isn't going to bring the victim back but many people believe that they will feel so much better when the perpetrator finally stops breathing. Actually though, if they look closely, they see that they don't really feel better, and that in fact they feel worse. But that's not easy medicine to swallow. So be careful when you present that. You can administer the medicine, but you sometimes get an adverse reaction from the patient. Be very cautious.

Take this teaching with you and see if you see how it operates. That is a tremendously good and transformative Dharma practice to do, that kind of study, especially if you are not attached to results, which is to say you're doing zazen at the same time. This will benefit yourself and others. This is the beginning of making a difference.

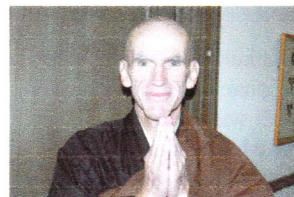
Edward Brown: Liberating Your Hands - April 7th

A student of Suzuki Roshi, Edward Espe Brown has practiced Zen since 1965 and yoga since 1980. His 10am lecture, *Liberating Your Hands*, explores the wisdom of our hands and ways that wisdom can blossom in our lives. After lunch, from 1:30-5pm, Edward continues the discussion about his work, described as liberation through handwriting, mindfulness touch, and hands-on healing meditation. He'll also do handwriting consultation and touch sessions, and offer his photo cards, books, and Japanese vegetable-cutting knives for sale. For more information, visit his website at www.peacefulseasangha.com.

Richard Urban Pottery: Flower Arranging-Crafts - May 12th

Richard Urban, Studio Potter, will sell tea bowls, altar vases, incense bowls and other ceramic gifts Saturday, May 12th at HSZC from noon-5pm. There will also be a demonstration of flower arranging for temple and home altars. The demonstration will be co-led by a floral designer from IXIA Flowers and Mimi Manning. Gary Weiss, a HSZC founder and the owner of IXIA has donated flowers for our altar for 25 years. Mimi, on the HSZC Board of Directors, was a SFZC flower chiden and learned flower arranging from Suzuki Roshi's wife, Okasan, and Meiya Wender from Green Gulch Farm. Other HSZC artisans will showcase their handicrafts as well.

Belated Acknowledgment



The HSZC newsletter staff gratefully acknowledges, albeit belatedly, the Rev. Renshin Judy Bunce for the use of her wonderful photo of Rev. John King.

Thank you and Gassho!